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Title:

Speech at the National Nine Network Luncheon, Hotel Australia

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, MR. DUNSTAN, AT THE NATIONAL
NINE NETWORK LUNCHEON. HOTEL AUSTRALIA. 15.3.72.

MR. DAVIES, MR. PACKER, MR. McKAY, GENTLEMEN:

THANK YOU FOR ASKING ME - ONE OF MARSHALL McLUHAN'S GLOBAL VILLAGERS - TO
THIS GATHERING OF VILLAGE ELDERS.

I EXTEND A PARTICULAR WELCOME TO YOUR INTERSTATE GUESTS.

ADELAIDE IS A FINE CITY TO VISIT AT ANY TIME. BUT, NOW, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE
FESTIVAL IT'S AT ITS VERY BEST AND I HOPE THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE DURING YOUR STAY
TO SAMPLE SOME OF THE LOCAL AND VISITING ATTRACTIONS.

SIR, THE MORE RECONDITE (AND STIMULATING) THEORIES OF PROFESSOR McLUHAN
ASIDE, I BELIEVE THE BASIC FUNCTION OF TELEVISION AND TELEVISION STATION
OPERATORS IS THAT WHICH LORD REITH ONCE DEFINED FOR RADIO: "TO EDUCATE,
INFORM AND ENTERTAIN".

NOW OBVIOUSLY - AND THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE OF THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS -
ENTERTAINMENT SHOULD TAKE FIRST PLACE.

PEOPLE WANT - AND HAVE A RIGHT - TO SIT DOWN IN THE EVENINGS AND ENJOY A RATTLING GOOD WESTERN OR SEAMY SAGA OF THE DOCTOR'S SURGERY. SOMEWHAT FEWER OF THEM ALSO WANT TO WATCH "MACBETH", "THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD"

WHICH NINE HAS JUST THOUGHTFULLY PROVIDED) OR A SYMPHONY CONCERT.

THERE MAY BE MUCH ARGUMENT ABOUT WHICH OR WHAT MIX OF WHICH TYPE OF ENTERTAINMENT SHOULD BE PROVIDED AT A PARTICULAR TIME.

THERE CAN ALSO BE GREAT ARGUMENT ABOUT WHERE SUCH PROGRAMMES SHOULD ORIGINATE - THE AUSTRALIAN CONTENT DEBATE. BUT NEITHER AUDIENCES NOR STATION OPERATORS WOULD SERIOUSLY QUESTION THE PROPOSITION THAT ENTERTAINMENT IS THE FIRST AMONG REITH'S EQUALS.

AS A VIEWER I'M AS INTERESTED AS THE NEXT MAN IN THE ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTED TO ME. AS A PRACTITIONER IN WHAT CAN BE ROUGHLY DEFINED AS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

I'M CONCERNED WITH THE EDUCATIVE AND INFORMATIONAL FUNCTIONS OF TELEVISION. IT'S ENORMOUS POWER TO INFLUENCE PEOPLE IS OBVIOUS.

NO OTHER MEDIUM IS AS IMMEDIATE AND DRAMATIC IN ITS IMPACT - WHICH IS PERHAPS WHY IT'S BEEN SUGGESTED THAT PRESIDENT NIXON CHOSE TO LAUNCH HIS 1972 ELECTION CAMPAIGN BY SATELLITE FROM PEKING. NO OTHER MEDIUM HAS THE CREDIBILITY OF TELEVISION.

THIS GIVES TELEVISION EXECUTIVES VERY GREAT POWER AND VERY GREAT RESPONSIBILITY. I BELIEVE THAT THIS HAS GENERALLY BEEN EXERCISED WITH PROPER CARE AND IMPARTIALITY BY BOTH PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL CHANNELS IN AUSTRALIA. CERTAINLY MY OWN EXPERIENCE WITH CHANNEL NINE HERE AND ELSEWHERE IN AUSTRALIA HAS LEFT ME WITH GREAT RESPECT FOR ITS EXECUTIVES' PROFESSIONALISM AND FAIRNESS.

I THINK ONE OF THE MOST ENCOURAGING TRENDS ON THE AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION SCENE IN RECENT TIMES IS THE NEW EMPHASIS ON CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES AND AGAIN THIS IS A FIELD IN WHICH NINE HAS TAKEN A LEAD.

THIS IS A WHOLLY GOOD THING. AN ALERT, INFORMED PUBLIC IS NOT ONLY ESSENTIAL TO OUR SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IT IS THE BEST GUARANTEE OF ITS MAINTENANCE.

IF THERE'S BEEN A QUIET CHANGE OF EMPHASIS TOWARDS CURRENT AFFAIRS RECENTLY THERE WILL SOON BE A MAJOR ONE.

COLOUR TELEVISION WILL NOT ONLY HAVE A BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE, IT MAY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO CURRENT EVENTS. TO CITE ONE OF THE MOST DRAMATIC EXAMPLES; ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT YET FULLY RESEARCHED, IT SEEMS THAT COLOUR TELEVISION HAD A MAJOR IMPACT ON AMERICAN ATTITUDES TO THE VIETNAM WAR. FOR THE FIRST TIME THE MASS OF PEOPLE AT HOME SAW CONFLICT NOT AS A BLACK, WHITE AND GREY AFFAIR BUT AS SOMETHING WHICH IS LITERALLY BLOODY. WE CAN DO NO MORE THAN SPECULATE ON WHETHER THIS WOULD HAVE APPLIED IN AUSTRALIA AS WELL. BUT IT WILL CERTAINLY BE INTERESTING - ~~XX~~ AND HOPEFULLY IT MAY BE LIFE-SAVING - TO SEE WHETHER THE ARRIVAL OF COLOUR STIMULATES CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR TERRIBLE ROAD ACCIDENT TOLL.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM IT WILL ALSO MEAN THAT THE POLITICIANS WILL SOON HAVE TO CHECK VERY CAREFULLY THAT TIES, SHIRTS AND SUITS ARE COLOUR CO-ORDINATED BEFORE HEADING FOR A PRESS CONFERENCE.

5.

SIR, I KNOW THAT THE NINE NETWORK IS WELL ON THE ROAD TO COLOUR AND HAS SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME AND A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY IN GETTING TO THIS STAGE. IT'S NOT SURPRISING THOUGH, SINCE YOU ESTABLISHED AN EARLY TRADITION OF RESPONSE TO PUBLIC DEMAND. YOURS WAS THE FIRST NETWORK TO BEGIN OPERATIONS AS SUCH IN AUSTRALIA AND THE FOUR COMPONENT STATIONS WERE THE FIRST TO BEGIN IN THEIR STATES.

AND IN COMMENDING THE NINE NETWORK FOR ITS ENTERPRISE AND INITIATIVE I'M NOT JUST BEING POLITE. AFTER ALL, I HAVE PICKED CHANNEL 9 TONIGHT TO EXPLAIN OUR SHOPPING HOURS POLICY TO SOUTH AUSTRALIANS.

THANK YOU.